

Triangle

JUNE / JULY 2018

# HOME

DESIGN & DECOR®

## *Outdoor Living*

How to Bring the Outdoors In

Look inside a Coastal Modern Retreat  
Designed by Laura Covington

Evergreen plantings along the walkway  
are well behaved in their place.

# THE *Healing Garden*

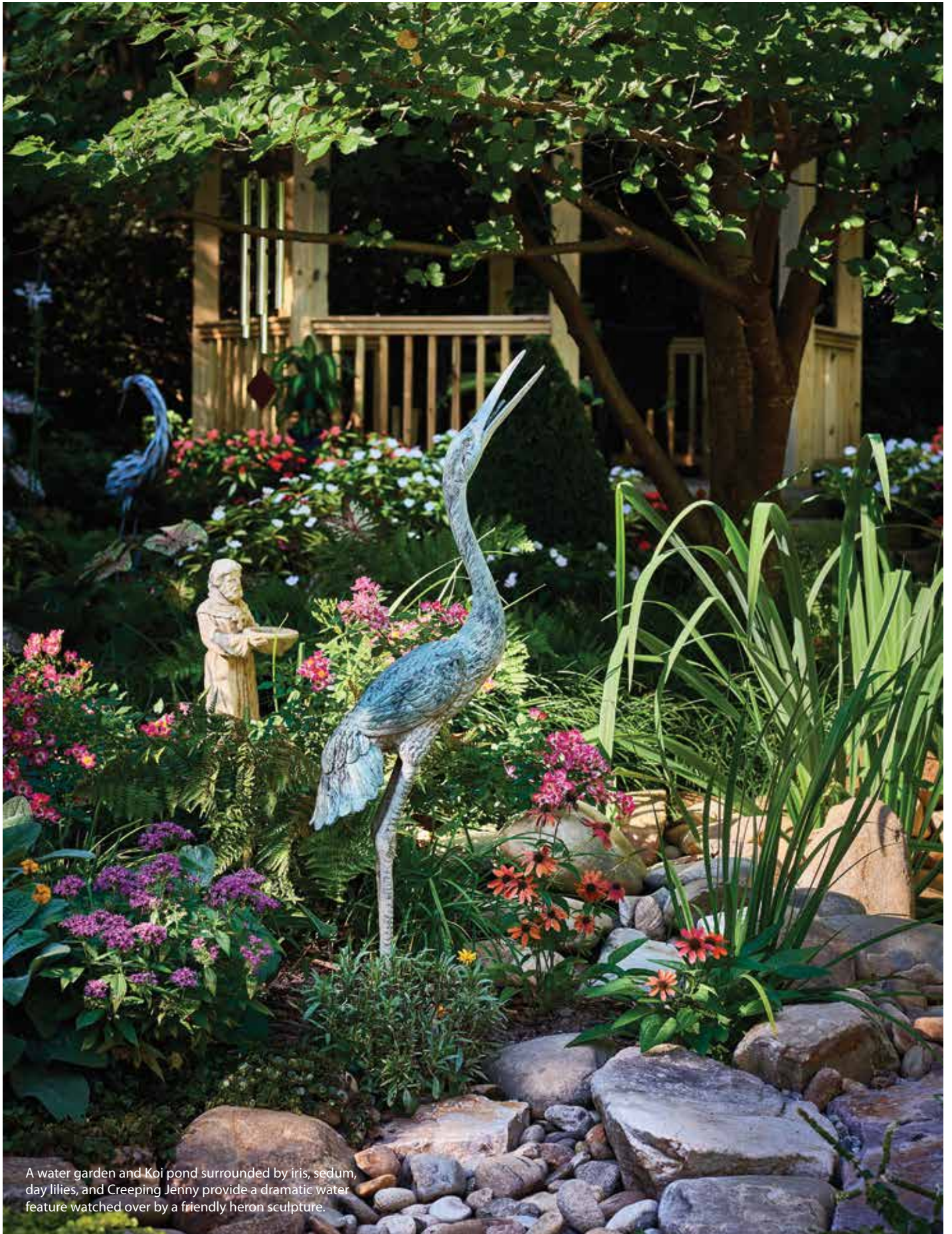
A classic garden in Raleigh  
inspires calm, delights the  
senses, and demonstrates  
the important role gardens  
play in the environment  
of a home.



**I**n 1997, Mary Stewart Carlisle and her husband, Greg, bought a 5,000 square-foot Williamsburg style home on three-quarters of an acre in west Raleigh. The colonial architecture was elegant, but the gardens were not only lacking but also virtually non-existent.

At that time, Carlisle's experience with plants was mostly tending to weeds peeking through the cement. She barely knew the difference between a garden and a yard. The couple tackled the garden themselves installing a water pond and a few small plantings in the backyard. Then, in 2013, Greg died, and the garden project was left unfinished.

Three years later, Carlisle hired Bill Strobe of Old North State Landscape Development in Durham to fix a drainage problem in her backyard. He stayed for a year. Carlisle thought her dream garden was something impossible to achieve, but as the relationship shifted from drainpipes to gardens, Strobe proved her wrong. With patience, respect, confidence, and an adventurous spirit, Strobe and his crew showed Carlisle that there was no such thing as impossible and anything could be done. Strobe never said, "We can't do that."



A water garden and Koi pond surrounded by iris, sedum, day lilies, and Creeping Jenny provide a dramatic water feature watched over by a friendly heron sculpture.



A tiered gazebo sits proudly on a stone foundation.

Carlisle shared her own ideas with Strobe and got spontaneous creativity in creating a plan that was a combination of formal sun and shade gardens, where art and nature could coexist. “I can’t recommend Strobe enough,” Carlisle says. “Working with him and his crew was such a wonderful experience. We became almost a family.”

It took a whole year for the traditional, formal gardens to emerge. The project was made easier because Old North State pretty much does everything from landscape design, building construction, irrigation, and stonework to installation, lighting, and maintenance.

During the installation, Carlisle learned that gardens are a way to show care. “This project was the best money I ever spent and one of the best times of my life,” Carlisle says. “It was a therapeutic joint effort that lifted my spirits. And the best thing is, that whatever the season, there is always beauty.”

The formal gardens are divided into distinct spaces and surround the entire house. Lush and evocative plants brimming with color, texture, and aroma grow year round, creating a natural harmony that frames the house and shapes the property.

Evergreen spiral topiaries and boxwoods, as well as thirty-foot magnolias and American hollies were planted around the perimeter to discourage conversations over the back fence. Carlisle likes her privacy.

There is stonework everywhere, including the front foundation of the house. This repetition of materials provided continuity from space to space, and carefully placed tiered stone steps defined the different areas. Various art elements throughout the gardens gave an additional depth.

With this project, Strobe created a bold recipe of color and form, simultaneously bright and striking yet subtle and serene. And, as with every proper garden, Carlisle’s is planned to be seasonally unique. Many different varieties of plants reflect a clean design plan, creating a visual cohesiveness. And although the colors and textures are ever-changing with the seasons, the many varieties of plants come together harmoniously by sticking to a few strategic hues.

“Our mission at Mary’s was to help her realize her dream,” Strobe says. “To create a spiritual garden space that was what she and her deceased husband always wanted. A place to get



*Top:* While Bill Strope was the driving force behind the garden design, Mary Carlisle's ideas and suggestions were enthusiastically embraced, and between them a serendipitous collaboration was born based on vision and creativity.

*Bottom:* Natural life takes center stage in Mary Carlisle's backyard garden.

*Right:* More than sixty tons of varying stone were brought in for the project. The patio surrounding the pool is Traverse stone from Turkey and features brick inlays.

lost in time through the simplicity, but yet artistic beauty of all the trees, plants, flowers, stone, and water – all the soothing natural elements of life and love. We are so happy our company's philosophy, vision, and spirituality were so in line with theirs."

Carlisle's friends call it the magic garden because the



vibe of the garden is one of a meditative, quiet sanctuary. “The beauty of working with Bill was that he followed my pace and didn’t impose stressful situations. As we created this garden, I felt the spirit of my husband guiding me,” Carlisle explains. “I learned that a garden is about new life and creating. It lifted my spirits and gave me new life.”

The transformative power of beauty is that it heals. And every garden, large or small, can have an emotional impact with a specific narrative. For Carlisle, this is an everlasting garden. And while its aesthetic charm is obvious, it’s much more. It’s a healing garden. ♦